

GRAUSTARK

#765

2002A, "Winter 1911"; 2002D, "Fall 1907"; 2004C, "Fall 1903"

21 May 2005



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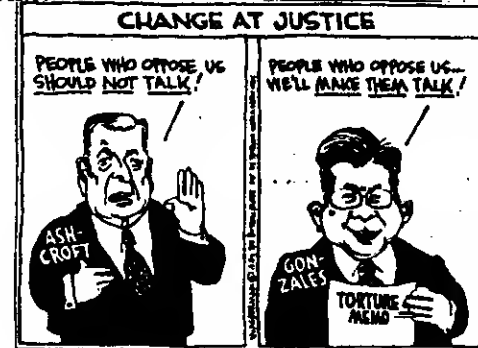
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FORTY-SECOND ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

LIFE UPON THE WICKED STAGE

Margaret Frazer (pseudonym of Gail Frazer), *A Play of Isaac* (2004, Berkley, NY; \$6.50 pb)

This is the first book in a series spun off from the author's successful series of the 15th-century detective adventures of Dame Frevisse, a Benedictine nun in Oxfordshire. Its hero is the strolling player Joliffe, whom we first met in *The Servant's Tale*, and who seems to be the only person in that series with as good a brain as Frevisse herself. Indeed, he sometimes even engages in some genteel flirting with her, to be genteelly rebuked.

This book is set in the summer of 1434, a few months after his first encounter with Dame Frevisse. His small company comes to Oxford to perform during the Corpus Christi holiday. And it is small indeed, even by the standard of his profession and era. Its leader is Thomas Basset, director, stage manager, and player of roles divine and human which require an authoritative presence. His daughter Rose and her young son Piers are members of the company, as are Rose's occasional lover Ellis and Joliffe himself. (Piers's father has long since deserted the troupe, and Ellis wishes to marry Rose but they are all uncertain about her present marital status.) Under the stage conventions of the time, Rose is limited to keeping the costumes and props in order, and to making up the actors, since women were not permitted on the stage, and feminine roles had to be played by male players in drag. (This situation continued through Shakespeare's time and on until 1660, when the royal family returned from a well-deserved exile in France, bringing with them the scandalous French custom of giving female roles to females.)

Unless they were sponsored by a member of the gentry, players led hazardous lives, always under suspicion of being vagabonds and thieves. They were suffered at all because of the general illiteracy of the time, when even literate people were forbidden to read the bible in their own language, and had to rely on what members of the clergy said about it. To get scriptural messages across to the general public, the clergy often relied on works of art, including the art of acting. Players performed in inn courtyards or in churches or churchyards. Many a priest, who hired players to present scenes from the life and teachings of Jesus, probably also had to keep a look-out that the actor who played the role of Jesus was not also seducing the local peasants' daughters between performances.

(These plays, and the ones in the repertory of Basset's company, had no reluctance to bring God and Jesus on stage portrayed by actors. This issue came up in 1942 as a reaction to Dorothy L. Sayers's series of BBC scripts "The Man Born to Be King". One member of Parliament was so upset at the portrayals of Jesus and his disciples by actors that he blamed the fall of Singapore on this radio drama. Objections to such divine portrayals seem to be mainly of Protestant origin, and because of their early use of printing, Protestants had introduced other means of making the public aware of Christian teachings. In my teens I once performed in a Protestant religious drama in which no actor portrayed Jesus, but the others represented characters from the Christian scriptures who talked about the effects of his deeds and teachings on their lives.)

A very few films have shown how these players lived and performed. Ingmar Bergman's *The Seventh Seal* contains too many supernatural elements to be a really good representation of the lives of strolling players. (And we are left wondering why, when the Crusaders were expelled from the allegedly Holy Land in 1291, Sir Antonius Block didn't get back to Sweden until the great plague strikes, in the 1340s. This was a longer homecoming than that of Odysseus!) Perhaps somewhat more representative is the scene in Sergei Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible, Part II*, in which actors perform in a church the biblical drama of the three Jewish youths in the fiery furnace. (Daniel 3) In this scene Tsar Ivan sees the drama as a criticism of the executions which he so frequently ordered, and explodes. So did Stalin; this film was not released until after his death.

Such dramas are still sometimes performed. A few years ago, I was walking by a nearby Roman Catholic church during the Easter season, when I saw a man in a robe who was carrying a cross while men dressed as Roman soldiers flogged him, and several parishioners looked on. The play was conducted in Spanish. While I have no interest in

the religious angle, I watched for several minutes, since scenes such as this lie at the roots of western drama. And in England, several traditional "miracle plays" are still presented at churches for the tourist trade. You will find the texts of several such plays in *Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas* (1924, Houghton Mifflin), edited by Joseph Quincy Adams, as if you could find a copy. (I searched for years, and finally turned up one in a used book shop in Frederick, Maryland.)

While completing a successful performance of *The Steward and the Devil*, a "morality play", in Oxford, Basset's troupe meets several members of a well-to-do local family, the Penteneys, whose wealth arises from provisioning the colleges of Oxford. Master Penteney and his wife have a son and a daughter; the son is married and has begotten a grandson, while the daughter's marriage prospects are an obvious plot element from when she first appears in the story. Master Penteney is also the legal guardian of two under-age brothers, Lewis and Simon Fairfield, and it is with Lewis, the elder, that much of the plot lies. For he is what was then called an "Eden-child", and whom we at once recognize as stricken with what was once called "mongolism" out of a fancied resemblance of their eyes to those of East Asians, but now called "Down's syndrome". "Lewy" is simple and in poor health, but good-hearted and biddable, and intrigued by the players and their plays. After the players return him safely to his guardian, a deal is struck whereby the players will perform two of their plays for the Penteneys and their guests, in return for comfortable board and lodgings at their estate just outside Oxford. Then it'll be back into Oxford to present *Abraham and Isaac*, for the Corpus Christi festival (the 9th Thursday after Easter).

This looks like a very good arrangement, until several complications spring up. Joliffe notices that Thomas Basset and Master Penteney seem to know each other from several years ago, when they were apparently involved in some secretive project on the wrong side of the law. Lewis wants to hang around the actors all the time, and is allowed to play, alongside young Piers, a non-speaking part as one of the capering devils who carries off the villain at the end of a morality play. (Part of their repertory is *The Pride of Life*, the earliest morality play part of whose text has come down to us.) Joliffe himself has a few secrets; at one point he meets an Oxford scholar whom he had known when they were both students at St. Edmund's Hall, before Joliffe changed his last name and abandoned the university for the life of a strolling player. And it is discovered that the Penteneys plan to marry their daughter Kathryn off to Lewis, thus extending Master Penteney's control over him and his inherited property into the indefinite future, limited only by the short life-span of most "Eden-children". If Lewis dies after the marriage, then Master Penteney will continue to manage his estate on behalf of his widow, thus freezing his younger brother Simon out of what would otherwise have been his own inheritance.

These complications take up so much time that the murder is not discovered until the end of the eighth of the book's twenty chapters. The victim is Hubert Leonard, a recent arrival whom Joliffe and Basset have seen in heated conversation with Penteney. Leonard claimed to have a letter from Penteney's long-missing elder brother, who got involved in "Lollardry", a revolutionary religious movement which was then regarded with the horror that twentieth-century America directed towards Communism, but later proved to be ancestral to Protestantism. This brother turns out to have fled to Bohemia, then called "the promised land of error" by pious Catholics. (Bohemia had a Protestant king before Martin Luther was born.) And, while religious reform was badly needed at the time, the Lollards had an unfortunate antipathy towards acting which was inherited a couple of centuries later by the Puritans. The author introduces a character whose arguments against acting are taken from a Lollard pamphlet.

(Yes, pamphlet, before the introduction of printing. Apparently these were handwritten, unless something is seriously wrong with the conventionally accepted date for the introduction of printing to Europe.)

This murder is still under investigation by the coroner, a much shrewder man than the coroner with whom Dame Frevisse had to deal, when the big feast takes place. Some of the Penteney's guests are historical characters: Lord and Lady Lovell, whom we have seen in some of the Dame Frevisse books, and Dr. Thomas Gascoigne, Chancellor of Oxford University. The feast ends with a successful production in the Penteney's dining hall

PATRIOTISM - XXXIX

PATRIOTISM is the principal cause of war.

PATRIOTISM is the unprincipled cause of war.

PATRIOTISM is Second Lieutenant Ilario Pantano, USMC, shooting two unarmed and kneeling Iraqi prisoners in the back because (he claimed) they were "about to attack him", firing 50 or 60 bullets at them from his M-16A4 rifle, pausing once to reload.

PATRIOTISM is Lt. Pantano then posting a sign over the Iraqis' bodies, proclaiming "No better friend, no worse enemy."

PATRIOTISM is the way Vietnam veteran Michael Smith demonstrated what a Vietnam veteran is, by spitting tobacco juice in the face of Jane Fonda because she believes that peace is preferable to war and that invaded nations have the right of self-defense.

PATRIOTISM is the enormous outpouring of support for Lt. Pantano and for Michael Smith from their fellow veterans and from bloodthirsty civilian war-lovers.

PATRIOTISM is the determination by Bush the Son, that "when it came to Al Qaeda, the Geneva Conventions were applicable only at his discretion." (*New York Times Book Review*, 17 October 2004)

PATRIOTISM is rocker Ted Nugent's speech before the National Rifle Association convention in Houston, where he waved an assault weapon in each hand while claiming that members should associate only with other members and that a long list of criminals should be shot rather than tried in courts or sent to prison.

PATRIOTISM is a denial, by Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez, that he used the "USA PATRIOT Act" to search the home of Brandon Mayfield when he was falsely accused of being a Muslim terrorist. This denial was a lie. (*Newsday*, 7 April 2005)

PATRIOTISM is a deep and abiding concern, at Columbus High School in the Bronx, that the food critic Mimi Sheraton omitted the words "under god" when she recited the Pledge of Allegiance over the school loudspeaker on 6 April 2005.

PATRIOTISM is the arrest of two 16-year-old New York City girls, immigrants from Bangladesh and Guinea, on charges that they were training to be suicide bombers. The federal government searched their homes without warrants, has never presented any evidence to support this claim, and has incarcerated the girls in Pennsylvania without access to their families or to attorneys, and without charging them with any crimes.

PATRIOTISM is the demand by Representative F. James Sensenbrenner III (R-WI), chair of the House Judiciary Committee, that the law should provide for prison sentences for people who commit what he calls "broadcast indecency" over the air.

PATRIOTISM is an Army drill sergeant forcing a recruit to swallow his own vomit, and dragging another by his ankles. He was not imprisoned or discharged.

PATRIOTISM is trying to destroy the career of the actress Maggie Gyllenhaal by a boycott because she concurs with a Defense Science Board report that "Historical data show a strong correlation between U. S. involvement in international situations and an increase in terrorist attacks against the United States." This assessment was made in 1997.

PATRIOTISM is the refusal of a Denny's restaurant in Florida to serve seven Arab-American men, all but one of them U. S. citizens, because "We don't serve bin Ladens here."

PATRIOTISM is American soldiers in Baghdad carrying empty Coke bottles in their Humvees, and bashing Iraqis over the head with them as they drive by. (Bob Herbert, *New York Times*, 2 May 2005)

PATRIOTISM is John R. Bolton, recently nominated to be American Ambassador to the United Nations, walking into a Florida polling place in 2000 and announcing: "I'm with the Bush-Cheney team and I'm here to stop the count."

PATRIOTISM is clearing Lt. Gen. Richard Sanchez and three other high-ranking American officers of accountability for the maltreatment of prisoners in Iraq.

PATRIOTISM is the claim by Rev. Pat Robertson that "liberal" federal judges are a worse threat to American freedom than is Al Qaeda.

PATRIOTISM is the American arrest of Khaled el-Masri, a German citizen, in the Balkans and torturing him in an Afghan prison as an Al Qaeda terrorist, which he is not.

PATRIOTISM is the principal cause of war.

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY

I would like to thank all readers who have sent their best wishes for my recovery following the hypoglycemic attack which I suffered in March. It only lasted a couple of hours, once the paramedics piped enough glucose into me. I was exhausted for the next few days, but have suffered no ill effects since.

*

Today's Terror Alert Color Code is Prison Orange. Fittings can be arranged in The Hague, for any of the war criminals in the Bush Administration.

*

Graustark is the Very First bulletin for the postal play of Diplomacy. It is published every fourth Saturday by John Boardman, 234 East 19th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11226-5302. Diplomacy is a board game of negotiation and conflict for the period of World War I. It was designed by Allan B. Calhamer and is now published by Hasbro. Another new postal Diplomacy game is now being organized in Graustark, at a game fee of \$35. (For Canadian and Mexican addresses the game fee is \$50, and for other foreign addresses it is \$100, or 75 euros in cash.) This game fee includes a subscription to Graustark for as long as the game lasts, whether or not you are eliminated. With your game fee send in a list of the countries you'd like to play, in your order of preference, and I'll try to put you as close to the top of that list as I can. If you do not already have the postal rules for Diplomacy, which were last published in Graustark #749, let me know when you send in your game fee, and I'll send you a copy.

This is
O At
P Great
E Intervals
R This
A Appears
T To
I Inflamm
O Optic
N Nerves

Graustark subscriptions for non-players are 10 issues for \$15 for U. S. addresses, and \$40 or 30 euros for others. Back issues as available are 10 issues for \$5 for U. S. addresses. To foreign addresses, back issues have the same price as for foreign subscriptions. # 2106

Players who phone in their moves should call me at 718-693-1579 or 718-951-5808, extension 2. There are answering machines which can take your moves if I'm out. I do not have an e-mail address.

I want to again remind players that the U. S. Postal "Service" is not capable of reliably getting mail here in less than a week. Please take this into account in sending in your moves. If, a few times, your moves have arrived here by mail in less than a week, do not assume that this will always be the case.

Graustark readers who are interested in postal games which don't run here, are invited to write to the publishers of 'zines with which I trade, and ask what game openings they have. For their addresses, see all the readers indicated by "(T)" for "trade" in the Graustark Directory on pp. 10-11. Several of these publishers run a wide variety of postal games.

*

Tom Howell has sent out a letter to all U. S. postal Diplomacy gamesmasters concerning the death of Phil Reynolds and the re-location of his games. Both of Phil's regular Diplomacy games have been placed with Jim Burgess's *The Abyssinian Prince*. It seems that there are now only eight postal Diplomacy 'zines being published in North America. They are, with their publishers:

The Abyssinian Prince (Jim Burgess)
Boris the Spider (Paul & Meg Bolduc)
Cheesecake (Andy Lischett).
Graustark (John Boardman)

Northern Flame (Robert Lesco)
off-the-shelf (Tom Howell)
S. O. B. (Chris Hassler)
Who Do You Trust? (Tim Haffey Sr.)

All their addresses may be found in "The Graustark Directory" on pp. 10-11. I would like to get the addresses of any European or Antipodean publishers who publish in English, German, or French. (At need I suppose I could also manage Dutch, which reads like a head-on collision between English and German.)

I had been sending trade copies of Graustark to Paul D. Kenny and Scott Morris, but do not recall receiving issues from them for some time. This is therefore an inquiry to them as to whether they are still publishing.

*

With the release of Ridley Scott's knight-time film *Kingdom of Heaven*, Hollywood has come out with another grossly un-historical film - perhaps its worst yet, always excepting the output of Mel Gibson, which occupies a depth of its own. (Gibson's version of *Hamlet* could be blamed on Shakespeare, who got the story from Belleforêt, who got it from Saxo Grammaticus, who got it from a sanguinary Old Norse saga, and each step of the process introduced more distortions. But after *Braveheart*, *The Patriot*, and *The Passion of the Christ*, Gibson's reputation as a falsifier of history on film stands alone.)

At this time, even a reasonably accurate presentation of the Crusades would be inappropriate, considering that Junior Bush has called his "pre-emptive" war on Iraq a "Crusade". But this is not what Scott has done. On 7 May 2005 the *New York Post*, a newspaper which vigorously supports Bush War II, gave us this list of inaccuracies:

MOVIE: Brotherhood of Muslims, Christians, and Jews worked to keep peace in Jerusalem.	HISTORY: No such group existed.
MOVIE: Orlando Bloom's character is a blacksmith who quickly becomes a knight and eventually leader of a huge army.	HISTORY: Nobody got promoted like that in the 12th century, especially a blacksmith.
MOVIE: Bloom's character doubts whether God exists, yet leads a Christian army.	HISTORY: They burned people at the stake for that in his day.
MOVIE: Saladin, the Muslim general, was a merciful Nelson Mandela-like figure.	HISTORY: He executed hundreds of Christian knights after they lost.

There were other complaints, mainly from Christian enthusiasts who objected to the fact that Christian enthusiasts who broke a truce with the Muslims are the film's villains. Yet the Crusades were from beginning to end an act of Christian aggression against Muslims who, after all, were not attacking Europe. You will find the details in Archibald Robertson's *How to Read History*, which explains how Pope Urban II conceived the notion of the Crusades as a way of uniting a divided Christendom against a foreign enemy.

Kingdom of Heaven is not even the first film to present Christians as aggressors and truce-breakers in the Crusades. You will find the same plot as far back as 1954, in the lame but eminently quotable *King Richard and the Crusaders*, a knock-off of Sir Walter Scott's novel *The Talisman*. And the truce with the Muslims actually ended in the late 12th century when a gang of Crusaders raided an obviously wealthy caravan, which was escorting a Muslim lady of high rank. The leader of the Crusaders promptly raped her. This was what we now call a "bad career move". She was Saladin's sister.

Most of the *Post*'s objections to *Kingdom of Heaven* are valid. But Saladin did have a good press among his Christian enemies, who regarded him as a skillful and honorable enemy. His slaughter of hundreds of knights did happen, after winning a siege against them, but that was standard operating procedure for that period, and his Christian enemies did the same thing when besieging one another back in Europe. The idea was to save wear and tear on besieging forces, by discouraging garrisons from resisting them, and this custom was followed as late as 1836 at the Alamo, and 1864 at Fort Pillow. And Atheism was long a capital crime among Christians, and still is in many Muslim nations. In the 17th century Thomas Aikenhead was hanged for Atheism in Scotland, as Presbyterian divines prayed around the gallows that he would *not* repent and thus sneak into Heaven at the last minute. To this day, Atheists are under civil disabilities in some American states. When, in 2003, the state of Florida executed a Presbyterian minister for murdering an Atheist, Christians erupted in a loud but ineffective uproar of outrage.

More to the point, the Crusades were from beginning to their futile and well-deserved end an act of aggression, fanaticism, and plunder. History emphatically teaches us that we should avoid any enterprise whose leaders and promoters describe it as a "crusade".

*

In *The Abyssinian Prince* #291, Jim Burgess reports on one of the major headaches

THE GRAUSTARK DIRECTORY

Players in a current postal Diplomacy games are indicated by its Boardman Number, with the initial of the country being played, and with "S" indicating an active stand-by player. (E. g., "2002A-G" or "2002D-FS".) Paying subscribers will be indicated by the number of the issue with which the subscription expires. Other designations are:

N: entrant in a new postal Diplomacy game now being organized in Graustark. (See p. 6 for details.)

T: trade copy

C: complimentary copy for a gamer

R: complimentary copy for a non-gamer interested in the mystery novel reviews

U: uncomplimentary copy

?: Do we trade? (See p. 6 for details.)

This directory is accurate to the date of 9 May 2005. Please let me know of any corrections or additions that need to be made, particularly if you want your nine-digit ZIP code, phone number, fax number, or e-mail address added to your listing. This is particularly important for electronic addresses, which seem to change more frequently than do postal addresses.

If you are already a Graustark subscriber when you decide to send in a game fee, then when the game begins, the number of issues you had coming when you joined will be added to your subscription once the game ends. After your name in the Directory will appear some such notation as "2004C-T+6".

Stephen Agar (T), 4 Cedar Gardens, Brighton BN1 6YD, ENGLAND; 01273-562430;

<stephen@stephenagar.com>

Hank Alme (2004C-A), 506 Paige Loop, Los Alamos, NM 87544; 503-672-0883;

<almehj@alummi.rice.edu>

Thom Anderson (R), #5-D, 10 Park Terrace East, New York, NY 10034

Ruth Berman (R), 2809 Drew Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55416-4209

John R. Biehl (2002A-RS, 2004C-R), #8, 11530 84th Avenue, Delta, BC V4C 2M1, CANADA;

604-591-1832; <jrb@dccnet.com>.

Mark Blackman (R), Apt. 4A, 1745 E. 17th St., Brooklyn, NY 11229

Paul & Meg Bolduc (T), 203 Devon Court, Ft. Walton Beach, FL 32547-3110; 850-863-9081;

<prbolduc@aol.com>; <bolduc@eglin.af.com>

Richard Bourgeois (2002A-G), 786 Myrtle Ave., Albany, NY 12208-2659; 518-437-9917

Anne Braude (R), 5316 W. Port au Prince Lane, Glendale, AZ 85306-3440

Colin Bruce (2004C-T+6), 22 Alliance Court, Hills Avenue, Cambridge CB1 7XE, ENGLAND

Jim Burgess (T), 664 Smith St., Providence, RI 02908-4327; 401-351-5287; <burgess@world.

std.com>; web page <<http://devel.diplom.org/DipPouch/Postal/Zines/TAP/index.html>>

Brian Burley (C), 23 Reynolds Place, Harrison, NJ 07029

Allan B. Calhamer (C), 501 N. Stone, La Grange Park, IL 60525-5523

Paul Cardwell Jr. (C), 1127 Cedar, Bonham, TX 75418-2913; 903-583-9296

David Charlton (C), 150 The Parade, Island Bay, Wellington 6002, NEW ZEALAND

Columbia Games Inc. (C), P. O. Box 3457, Blaine, WA 98231

Jim Dapkus (766), W6575 Dakota Ave., Westfield, WI 53964

Jim Dunnigan (C), 328 W. 19th St., New York, NY 10011

Paul Evans (T), 180 Aylsham Dr., Ickenham, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB10 8UF, ENGLAND

Mark Fassio (U), 276 Yates Lane, Pendleton, KY 40055-7751

Sue Feder (R), Historical Mystery Appreciation Society, 3 Goucher Woods Court, Towson,

MD 21286; fax 410-847-9303; <monkshould@home.com>; <<http://members.home.net>.

/monkshould>

Mike Fisher (765), #2, 43 W. Manheim St., Philadelphia, PA 19144-2942

Jim Grose (767), Apt. 210, 110 Forward Ave., Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 4S9, CANADA;

613-728-8493; <JimGrs@aol.com>.

Timothy R. Haffey Sr. (T), 810 53rd Ave., Oakland, CA 94601; 510-536-3513;

<trhaffey@yahoo.com>

Chris Hassler (T), 2000 S. Armour Court, La Habra, CA 90631; 562-690-7827; fax 562-690-

7827; <chassler@adelphia.com>

Sharon Heap (C), 2876 NY Route 26 South, Vestal, NY 13856

Raymond & Faith Heuer (R), 2nd floor, 9 Beacon Terrace, Keansburg, NJ 07734-1914

Tom Howell (T), 365 Storm King Road, Port Angeles, WA 98363; 360-928-9698;
 <off-the-shelf@olympus.net>
 Harley Jordan (2002A-T, N), 109 Sunnyside Dr., Rochester, NY 14623; 585-475-9832
 Susan Keaveny (R), 1030 Tyrus Court, North Merrick, NY 11566-1035
 Paul D. Kenny (?), 9 Cobblestone Road, Cherry Hill, NJ 08003-1420
 Paul Koch (2004C-E), 24920 Fairmount Dr., Dearborn, MI 48124; 313-274-6579
 Robert Lesco (T), 49 Parkside Drive, Brampton, Ontario L6Y 2H1, CANADA;
 <rlesco@yahoo.com>
 Andy Lischett (2002D-FS, T), 2402 Ridgeland Ave., Berwyn, IL 60402
 Rick Loomis (C), Flying Buffalo Inc., P. O. Box 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252
 Michael Lowrey (C), 6903 Kentucky Derby Drive, Charlotte, NC 28215-6507; 704-569-4269
 Joseph T. Major (C), 1409 Christy Ave., Louisville, KY 40204-2040
 Harry Manogg (C), Apt. 608, 108 Kilmarnock St., Boston, MA 02215
 Brad Martin (T), 2/14 Joseph Street, Maylands, 6051, Western Australia, AUSTRALIA;
 <Westfront@hotmail.com>
 Dan Mathias (2004C-G), 509 Bayview Drive, Lusby, MD 20657; 410-326-2568;
 <dcmathias@comcast.net>
 Dan McKinsey (2002A), 33 Belmont St., Hamden, CT 06517; 203-288-2736;
 <Daniel.mckinsey@yale.edu>
 Paul D. Milewski (767), 7 Mallard Drive, Amelia, OH 45102-2148; 513-752-2411
 David Milliams (T), Paideia School, 1509 Ponce de Leon Ave., Atlanta, GA 30307
 Maggie Montgomery (R), Apt. 819, 325 W. 45th St., New York, NY 10036
 Brendan Mooney (2004C-I), 423 Lenox Ave., Westfield, NJ 07090; 908-654-0527;
 <bkmoooney@comcast.net>
 Scott Morris (?), 12110 Shelbyville Rd., Louisville, KY 40243; <scottm221@aol.com>
 Michael Neal (2002D-RS, 770), P. O. Box 52071, New Orleans, LA 70152-2071;
 <MDNEAL79@hotmail.com>
 Albert A. Nofi (C), CNA Corp., Apt. 1605, 4825 Mark Center Drive, Alexandria, VA 22311;
 <anofi@aol.com>
 Carsten Obst (C), Pechsteinstr. 13, D-24539 Neumünster, GERMANY
 Keith Wm. Oschman (U), Riverside Christian School, Lost Creek, KY 41348
 Michael P. Quirk (2002D-GS, N), Apt. 10, 2750 Brittany Terrace, Manhattan, KS 66502;
 785-587-0872
 Roberta Rogow (R), 1755-A Manor Drive, Irvington, NJ 07111
 Karl Schmit (772, N), Apt. 3, 1452 Seville Dr., Green Bay, WI 54302; 920-469-5981;
 <diplomacy@new.rr.com>
 Bruce Schneier (C), Counterpane Systems, 101 E. Minnehaha Parkway, Minneapolis, MN 55419
 Greg Stafford (C), Chaosium Inc., #423, 895 B Street, Hayward, CA 94541-5107; 510-583-
 1000; fax 510-583-1101
 David Stone (2002A), 154 Cardinal Drive CSL, North Vernon, IN 47265
 Sigourney Street (2002A-F), P. O. Box 1235, Boston, MA 02130-0011
 Gary Tesser (R), #5-A, 2455 Haring St., Brooklyn, NY 11235
 Eric Verheiden (2002D-IS, 767), 1805 Vista del Oro, Fullerton, CA 92831-1331;
 <everheid@adelphia.net>
 Brenton Verploeg (799), 1980 Tigertail Rd., Coconut Grove, FL 33133
 Conrad von Metzke (C), 4374 Donald Ave., San Diego, CA 92117-3813; 858-270-8313;
 <metske@san.rr.com>
 William Watkins (2002A-A), 918 Bogert Road, River Edge, NJ 07661; 201-265-9194;
 <watkins.bill@verizon.net>
 Stephen T. Whitmore (C), 350 Old Paper Mill Road, Newark, DE 19711; 302-368-1127
 Fred Wiedemeyer (2002A, 2002D-ES, 2004C-F), Box 92010, Meadowbrook RPO, Edmonton,
 Alberta T6T 1N1, CANADA; 780-465-6432; cell 780-497-8283; <wiedem@planet.eon.net>
 Don Williams (N), 27505 Artine Dr., Saugus, CA 91350-2193; 661-297-3947;
 <dwilliams@fontana.org>
 W. Andrew York (767), P. O. Box 201117, Austin, TX 78720-1117; <wandrew@compuserve.com>

LIFE UPON THE WICKED STAGE (continued from p. 4)

of *The Pride of Life*.

But their crowning performance in Oxford is *Abraham and Isaac*, performed for a

large public audience on a stage next to a major church. This is not surprising, since Abraham's aborted sacrifice of Isaac has always been a popular bible story. Professor Adams informed us that no fewer than six texts of this play have come down to us from the Middle Ages. To judge from excerpts quoted by the author, she has used the same text as Adams, but modernized in spelling and vocabulary for better understanding by a 21st-century audience. "It was a tale that played to emotions that never staled," the author comments, and we are reminded that, owing to that era's inferior medical care, losing a child was a far more common experience in the 15th century than it is today.

The meaning of *Abraham and Isaac* is something on which agreement is much less common. Christianity attempts to force every event in the Jewish scriptures into a prediction and anticipation of the life, execution, and resurrection of Jesus. This means that the aborted sacrifice of Isaac by his father somehow predicts the sacrifice of Jesus as allowed by his father. But the original custodians of this story see it quite differently. Several years ago, we attended the *bar mitzvah* of the son of an old friend - a Jewish ceremony roughly equivalent to a Christian confirmation. (That was indeed several years ago; in September we will be attending his wedding.) The torah portion for that day was the *akedah*, the binding of Isaac. In his sermon, the rabbi pointed out that the sacrifice of children was a religious ritual for several neighboring peoples, and that the *akedah* strongly opposed this practice, and recommended animal sacrifice instead. (One of the props in the play *Abraham and Isaac* was a very realistic "ram-in-the-bush", carefully concealed until it appears at the play's climax.)

The theme of this play oddly anticipates the second murder which Joliffe solves, mainly because it afflicts their host's family, and a wandering company of actors might easily be suspected of any mishap that might take place. Besides, Joliffe gets much pleasure out of exercising his insatiable curiosity and his superior intelligence.

As the book ends, the players fall into unexpected good luck. Impressed by their plays, Lord Lovell takes the company into his service. They are now no longer wandering vagabonds, but properly chartered servants of one of the kingdom's most influential men.

Unfortunately, we know that this good fortune will not last long. By the time of the author's *The Prioress' Tale*, set five years hence in 1439, the company will have broken up, and when Joliffe next meets Dame Frevisse he will be on the road with a solo act.

PLEASE STAND BY

I am willing to take over games that have been abandoned by their gamesmasters. So if you are a postal gamesmaster who is no longer able to publish, or if you are a player in a postal game of regular Diplomacy that has gone for two or three months without a move being published, please get in touch with the Orphan Games Director, Michael Lowrey. (See p. 11 for his address.) If the game is to continue in Graustark, I would need the addresses of all active players, the current position, and a list of who owns which supply centers. If subscription money can be passed along to me, fine. Otherwise I will ask players to join a new game in Graustark, or to subscribe to Graustark if they do not already do so. Players who resign or drop out can be replaced by Graustark stand-by players.

Stand-by players are always needed for postal Diplomacy games in Graustark. If you volunteer as a stand-by, you may be called upon whenever a current player misses a move. If you send in moves for that country for the next turn, and the present player does not, you will take over play of that position. No game fee will be asked, though you should keep your subscription current, or enroll in a new Graustark game. No stand-by will be called upon in a game in which he or she has already played.

Stand-by volunteers who are willing to take on additional games of postal Diplomacy are listed below. A stand-by player who is already playing in a Graustark game is indicated by "*". A player who is called on in this issue to stand by is indicated by "#". If you wish your name added to or removed from this list, please let me know.

Hank Alme
John R. Biehl*
Paul D. Milewski
Michael Neal*

Michael Quirk*
Eric Verheiden*
Fred Wiedemeyer*

DUNGEONS & CHRISTIANS (continued from p. 9)

This correlation obviously bothers many Christians. In 1964, when the Civil Rights Act was under debate in Congress, an out-of-office politician named Richard Nixon suggested that its protection should be explicitly denied to Atheists. This proposal was rejected. But this attitude appeared again in a statement by Bush the Father, that an Atheist cannot be a good American. And his public professions of religiosity suggest that Bush the Son feels the same way.

In recent years, educational institutions at all levels have received numerous Christian demands that they ought to teach creationism, "intelligent" design, the "young universe" notion, and conceivably also geocentric astronomy and the stork theory of reproduction. Now, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, where I taught physics for 35 years, is striking back. Professor Timothy Shortell, chair of the Department of Sociology, has responded to the recent flood-tide of Christian fanaticism by observing that "the devout are an ugly, violent lot. In the name of their faith, these moral retards are running around pointing fingers." (*New York Daily News*, 23 and 25 May 2002) Persons who believe that this is not happening are directed to Waco, to Oklahoma City, to the mass graves of Muslims slaughtered by Christian terrorists in Yugoslavia, or to the Pentagon office of Lt. Gen. Boykin, who believes that the U. S. Army in the Muddle East is the "Christian army" of a "Christian nation" which is fighting a "holy war" against Muslim "idolaters".

Professor Shortell has been getting flack over this statement from the usual sources, but the justice of his statement is difficult to deny. And assaults on academic freedom cannot expect even the transitory successes they enjoyed in the 1950s.

*

The conservative newspaper columnist Charles Krauthammer took up Chess in his column on the last page of *Time* of 2 May 2005. Concerning the well-known antics of former world Chess champion Bobby Fischer, he headed this column "Did Chess Make Him Crazy?" Krauthammer cited the cases of several previous world Chess champions who were decidedly over the edge - Paul Morphy, who wandered the streets of New Orleans talking to himself; Wilhelm Steinitz, who after losing the championship to Emmanuel Lasker wound up in an insane asylum in New York City, claiming that he played Chess with God and could give him pawn and move; Aleksandr Alyokhin, an alcoholic who collaborated with the Nazis; and Fischer's own wacky antics. He could have added Akiba Rubinstein, who should have been the next champion after Lasker but came out of World War I with a bad case of shellshock, and Boris Spasky, like Alyokhin and Fischer a notorious anti-Semite. And he blames the whole thing on an interpretation of Chess that seems to me to be highly questionable.

Sometimes the media carry a report of someone who was allegedly driven crazy, or caused to commit a crime, by Dungeons & Dragons or a computer game. The problem here is not gaming but obsession, of which almost anything might be a focus. Replacing an obsession with a game by an obsession with religion or politics does not really help the patient a bit.

And, of course, no claim that an RPG caused a person to commit crimes, suicide, or any other anti-social act has ever been supported by a finding of any court in any country. Sometimes such claims are made by prosecutors who insist that D&D drove a defendant to commit a crime, and sometimes they are made by defense attorneys who claim that a defendant is not really guilty because D&D made him do it. And sometimes the claims are merely the product of irresponsible coverage in the media. But never are any of them supported by court decisions.

WHEN DO YOU EXPIRE?

The subscriptions of the following readers expire with the indicated issue of *Graustark*. This information is valid to the date of 21 May 2005. For information on joining a new game, or extending your subscription, see below.

765 - Mike Fisher
766 - Jim Dapkus
767 - Jim Grose

767 - Paul Milewski
Eric Verheiden
W. Andrew York

770 - Michael Neal
799 - Brenton Verploeg

RUSSIAN TO AND FRO

The Russian unit listed in the last issue as "F Bla" is actually "F Con". Michael Neal is now playing Russia.

ENGLAND (Wiedemeyer): A St.P-Mos; F Nrg-Nwy; F Nwy-St.P(n.c.); F Bar S F Nwy-St.P(n.c.); F Lon holds.

FRANCE (Lischett): A Ven-Apu; A Pie-Ven; A Tyr S A Pie-Ven; A Rom-Nap; F Tyr S A Rom-Nap; F Tun-Ion; F Wes-Tun; F Tus-Rom.

GERMANY (Quirk): A Bud S A Vie; A Vie S A Bud; A Liv & A War S ENGLISH A St.P-Mos; F Bot & F Bal S A Liv; A Pru S A War.

ITALY (Verheiden): F Nap-Ion; F Adr S F Nap-Ion; A Tri-Bud; A Ser S A Tri-Bud.

RUSSIA (Neal): A Mos-Ukr; F Aeg S ITALIAN F Nap-Ion; A Ukr-Gal; A Rum S ITALIAN A Tri-Bud; A Apu-Rom; A Sev-Arm; F Con-Smy.

Underlined moves are not possible. *The German A Bud is dislodged and annihilated. The High Combatant Powers now control the following supply centers:

ENGLAND: Edi, Liv, Lon, Mos, Nwy, St.P. (6)

FRANCE: Bel, Bre, Mar, Nap, Par, Por, Spa, Tun, Ven. (9)

GERMANY: Ber, Den, Hol, Kie, Mun, Swe, Vie, War. (8)

ITALY: Bud, Gre, Rom, Ser, Tri. (5)

RUSSIA: Ank, Bul, Con, Rum, Sev, Smy. (6)

Germany may build two new units, and Italy, France, and England may each build one. Russia must remove one unit. The deadline for these "Winter 1907" orders is NOON, FRIDAY 5 AUGUST 2005.

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY (continued from p. 8)

service, and conquer Asia.

Or maybe this is merely another instance of an effect we have frequently seen. I have noticed that a sudden drop in the efficiency of the USP"S" usually precedes an increase in the postal rates. The amount now being rumored is 39c for the first ounce.

*

"Newsweek...reports that the Pentagon forced an expert bipartisan panel to pull a document from its Website that was critical of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's plan to close military bases. Old Rummy, it seems, can do no wrong." - *New York Post*, 16 May 2005

All right - now are there *still* any questions about why *Newsweek* was made to retract its report about destruction of Korans by guards at Guantánamo Bay?

Incidentally, the patriotism of *Newsweek* cannot be questioned. In 2001, *Newsweek* urged editorially that suspects in terrorism cases should be tortured.

*

Karl Schmit writes that he has a new address, superseding the one on p. 11. It is 1509 O'Keefe Road, De Pere, WI 54115. His telephone number is now 920-338-8402. His e-mail address remains unchanged.

*

A few misprints and incomplete statements need to be cleaned up from recent issues. In my review of Sir John Mortimer's *Rumpole and the Penge Bungalow Murders*, in #761, I expressed doubt that a World War II bomber could have managed with a crew of only three. I have since discovered that the Royal Air Force had a light bomber, the Mosquito, made of plywood to foil enemy radar. I have been unable to find any figures on the crew size of a Mosquito, but it weighed only 10 tons, and probably could have been managed by only three people.

Doctors Without Borders, to whom I recommended contributions for tsunami aid,

(continued on p. 16)

2004C

"Fall 1903"

PLAYING TAG IN THE BALKANS

When Colin Bruce phoned in his Turkish "Spring 1903" moves I transcribed mistakenly one of his moves. Instead of "F Eas-Ion", which failed, it was "F Eas-Aeg", which succeeded. The dislodged Austro-Hungarian A Ser retreated to Rumania, its only option.

ENGLAND (Koch): A Bel-Hol; F Nth-Den; F NAT-Nrg; F Iri-Eng.

FRANCE (Wiedemeyer): F Bre-Eng; F Mid S F Bre-Eng; A Pic S A Bur-Bel; A Bur-Bel;
F Spa(s.c.) S F Mid.

GERMANY (Mathias): F Den-Nth; F Nwy S F Den-Nth; A Hol-Ruh; A Mun-Ruh; A Boh-Vie.

ITALY (Mooney): A Tri-Bud; A Ser S A Tri-Bud; A Ven-Tri; F Adr S A Ven-Tri; F Ion holds;
F Tun S F Ion.

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (Alme): A Alb-Tri; A Rum-Ser; A Bud & A Vie S A Alb-Tri.

RUSSIA (Biehl): A Arm-Ank; F Bla S A Arm-Ank; A Gal-Rum; A Sev S A Gal-Rum.

TURKEY (Bruce): F Gre-Alb; F Aeg-Con; A Ank holds; A Bul S ITALIAN A Ser.

Underlined moves are not possible. The complicated situation in the Balkans revolves around the fact that the Italian A Ven and the Austro-Hungarian A Alb were each ordered to Trieste with one valid support. The Italian A Tri, which does not have enough valid support to move to Budapest, is therefore not dislodged.

The English A Bel is dislodged and annihilated, since Ruhr is left vacant owing to a stand-off. England must retreat F Nth-Ska, -Hel, -Lon, -Yor, or -Edi, or be removed. The direction of this retreat should be sent in with the "Winter 1904" moves, which may be made conditional upon its direction. Turkey retreats A Ank-Smy, and Austria-Hungary retreats A Rum-Ukr.

The High Combatant Powers now control the following supply centers:

ENGLAND: Edi, Liv, Lon. (3)	ITALY: Nap, Rom, Ser, Tri, Tun, Ven. (6)
FRANCE: Bel, Bre, Mar, Par, Por, Spa. (6)	AUSTRIA-HUNGARY: Bud, Vie. (2)
GERMANY: Ber, Den, Hol, Kie, Mun, Nwy, Swe. (7)	RUSSIA: Ank, Mos, Rum, St.P, Sev, War. (6)
	TURKEY: Bul, Con, Gre, Smy. (4)

Germany and Russia may each build two new units, and France may build one. England also has a build if the dislodged F Nth is removed. Austria-Hungary must remove two units. The deadline for these "Winter 1903" orders is NOON, FRIDAY 5 AUGUST 2005.

ANKARA (Oct. 31, 1903): Czar Ivan VII, facing the Alaeddin Mosque, exulted, "How gloriously fitting to liberate this city after exactly 500 years of Ottoman rule. I herewith order the minaret tower to be utterly destroyed and this ancient holy building be purged of its heathen symbols. I re-dedicate this holy place as the church of St. Paul who once graced this city with his presence as I do now. My troops, it is our divine duty to spread the true faith to all the Turkish heathen. On to Constantinople!"

MUNICH MUCKRAKER: The Palace Chef is rumored to be searching for North Atlantic Salmon for the Kaiser's upcoming Gala. All the fish markets have been short on supplies since the fishing fleet was grounded to only off-shore waters some time back. The supply of fish has been severely depleted. Rumors abound that sightings of German warships out to sea are really only disguised fishing boats on a secret mission to fulfill the Kaiser's request.

2002A

"Winter 1911"

FRANCE (Street) Builds F Bre.

RUSSIA (Biehl): Removes A Ber.

AUSTRIA-HUNGARY (Watkins): Builds A Bud.

TURKEY (Jordan): Builds A Con.

The deadline for "Spring 1912" moves is NOON, FRIDAY 5 AUGUST 2005.

BERLIN (Dec. 31, 1911): Grand Duke Ivan has ordered the evacuation of Berlin remarking, "I leave the looted and empty shell for the unholy troika. May they squabble over its remains."

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY (continued from p. 14)

received \$32,000,000, four times what it needed. The excess is being reallocated to their other work. UNICEF, the Red Cross, and AmeriCares also got more than they had expected.

The collaborationist French politician who was assassinated by the French Resistance during World War II was Philippe Henriot; I had misspelled this name in #762. And the Yugoslav collaborationist Ante Pavelić was mortally wounded in Argentina in 1957; he died in 1959 in Spain. As he lay bleeding in the gutter, he asked to be taken to the Syrian-Lebanese Hospital because he knew that was the only place he wouldn't find a Jewish doctor. (As it happened, he had been hunted down by Yugoslavs, not Jews.)

In my review of John Maddox Roberts' *SPQR VIII: The River God's Revenge*, I cited a Chinese invasion of central Asia under a Korean general. This confused two widely separated Chinese campaigns in that region. A Korean general did not lead the campaign of 36 BCE, in which Chinese troops fought Roman legionaries for the only time. The later campaign, with a Korean general, was in 751 CE.

And the monk Dionysius Exiguus, who established our custom of measuring years from the presumed year of the birth of Jesus, lived in the sixth rather than the fifth century.

I want to apologize to readers for the delay in the publication of this issue. I am confident that, with this issue, I can finally get back to a four-week schedule for my publications, both Graustark and my science-fiction and fantasy fanzine Dagon.

GRAUSTARK #765

John Boardman
234 East 19th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11226-5302



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